

THE
WVAY TO
A BLESSED
ESTATE IN
THIS LIFE.

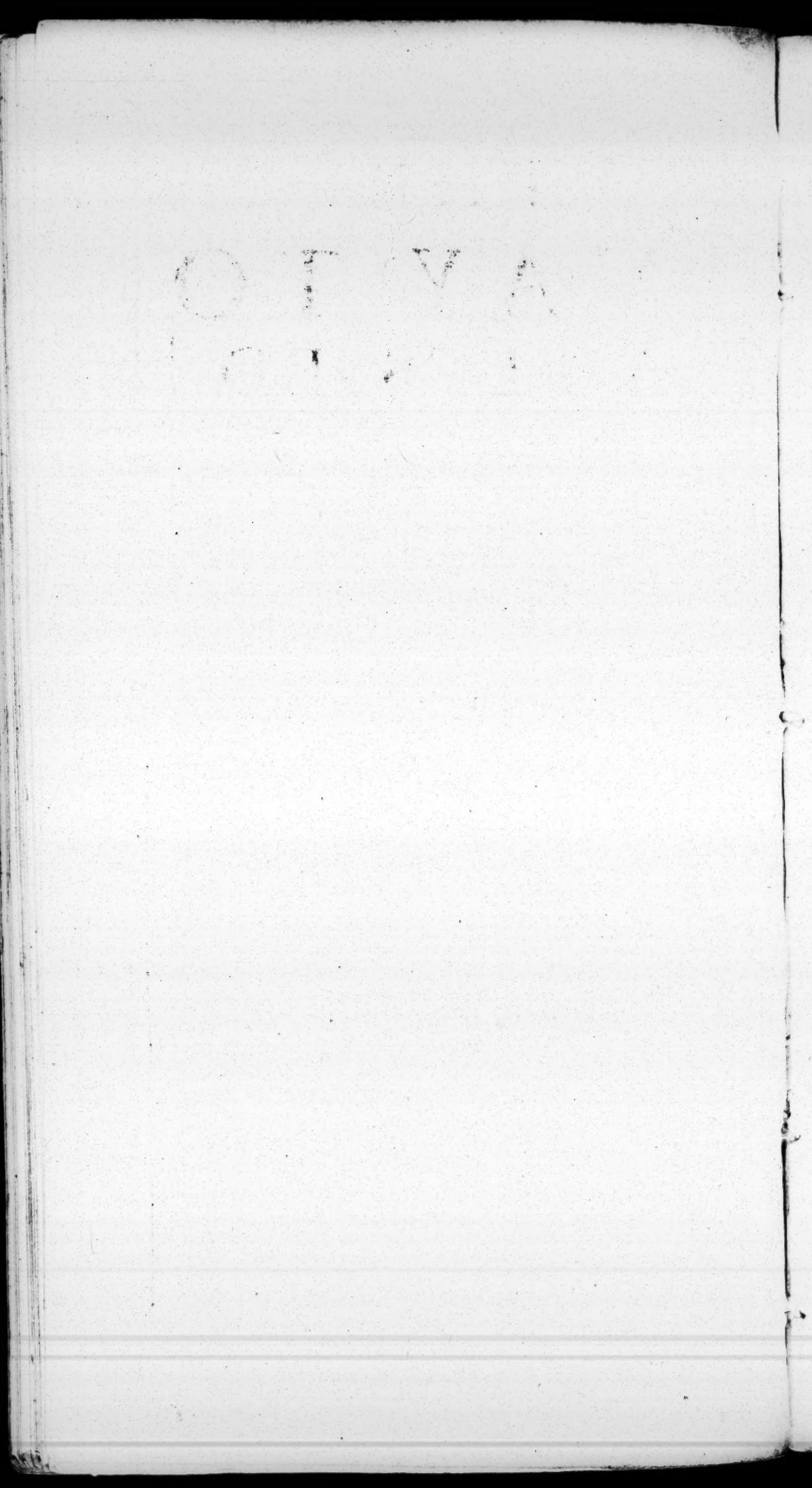
BY

EZEKEL CULVERVELL.



L O N D O N

Printed by John Dawson, for
William Sheppard, and are to be sold
at his shop, at the entring in of
Pope's-head Alley out of Lam-
beth-Street. 7. 6 x 40.





THE WAY TO A BLESSED ESTATE IN THIS LIFE.



H A T which our
Lord Iesuſ from
Heaven writ vnto
the Church of
Sardis; Thou hast

Rev. 3, 1.

a name that thou liuest, but art
dead, may be truly ſpoken of the
greater ſort of not-counterfeit
Profefſors of the Faith in our
time: for it is cleare by the Text,
that this is not ſpoken of hypocrites,
who are ſtarke dead, but

Many drow-
sie profes-
sors.

of such who having some life remaining in them, are in a dead sleepe: for these of whom I speake, take good paines to keepe vp a name of Christiani-
tie, both in the exercises of Reli-
gion, and in their outward be-
haviour, (though in both there
be much fayling,) but in very
truth there is but a little life of
faith and loue in all their Pro-
fession, as may appaere in their
cold and vncomfortable pray-
ers, in their wandering and
drowsie hearing of the Word,
and vnfruitfull receiving of the
Sacraments, and much more in
their abuse and neglect of the
secret exercises of Prayer, rea-
ding, and meditation by them-
selves, and conference with o-
thers, seldom deeply beway-
ling their estate, leesse reioycing
in the assurance of their saluati-
on by Christ, as seldom delight-
ing in God, with a zeale to set
forth his glorie in every part of
their

their life.

Though this bee the state of the greater part of those that haue some truth of grace in them, yet may we say again, that there are with vs, (as in the Church of *Sardis*) *a few names that haue not defiled their garments*, that is, doe liue vnrebulably, and walke worthy their holy calling, having a sweete feeling of Gods favour vnto them, and so can boldly come vnto him in time of need, with assurance that he doth graciously respect them, their prayers, and vnfeigned obedience; who likewise doe more delight themselfes in God, then in all earthly things, accounting it their greatest griefe to offend him, and greatest ioy to please him; possessing their soules with confidence and patience in their greatest trialls, looking for the appearing of Christ.

This is that blessed estate to be

A few worthy.

What a
blessed life,
here may
be attained

Desire by
many, not
attained.

How this
life is at-
tained.

injoyed in this life, which God hath prepared, (though in divers measures) for the faithful, all which may well be contained in this short sentence of the *Psalmt. Psal. 37. 4.* *Delight thy selfe in the Lord, and he will give thee thy hearts desire:* which I doubt not but all true Christians (when they haue well considered it) would be glad to attaine vnto : But either through ignorance of the way how to attaine it; or through negligence; not putting in practise what they know : they spend many yeares, either securely, or uncomfortably, seldom attaining to that heauenly feasting, which (if they were wise) might bee their daily refreshing: whose estate I much rendering, doe endeavour to shew them, how this happie life may bee attained; which I conceiueth to be only by a more plentifull feeding vpon Christ by faith. It is without que-

question, that all and every part of our spirituall life is in Christ, of whose fulnesse we receive grace for grace: and this is as cleare, that we receiue no grace first or last from Christ, but by beleving: in which respect Christ is truly and principally said to be our spirituall food, and beleving to be the true feeding vpon him. Which being so, it necessarily followes, that feeding seldoine or weakely, we cannot haue much spirituall strength: and otherwise feeding plentifully and soundly, wee shall be fat, and flourishing in grace, and so attaine vnto the blessed life spoken of.

For the better vnderstanding and practising whereof, this is specially to be considered, How every true beleever may daily, yea, oft in the day, by faith feed vpon Christ, that so he may receiue from him all spirituall nourishment, for his refreshing

Ioh.1.16.

Ioh.6.27.

35

34.

How to
feed oft in
the day on
Christ.

and strengthening to every good worke.

This is done by setting before vs those sweet promises, which God hath made to vs, for the strengthening of our faith in all our necessities: and, so particularly to apply them to our selues. Whereby we may comfortably assure our selues, that we shall enjoy that which God hath promised. Wherein we are first to get the true meaning of that which is promised.

Secondly, To see wee haue a good warrant, that this is promised to vs, that therevpon we may conclude, we shall certainly enjoy that which God hath promised, seeing he is faithfull who hath promised.

Example.

But seeing this is not well conceived by many, I wil make it plaine by example. I Cor. I. 30. it is said; *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdome, and righteousness,*

nesse, and sanctification, and redemption. In which is as much sayd as may be conceived, or desired; the meaning whereof is, that every true beleever, is by Gods spirit made a living member of Christ Iesus, from and in whom, hee is made by God a true partaker of all things needfull to salvation: that whereas he is by nature foolish, guylie, filthy, and in bondage, now in Christ he is made perfectly wise righteous, holy, freed from all his enemis, and so restored to full happiness. This promise of God being clearely vnderstood, must now be applyed particularly by every beleever to himselfe, thus: Seing God who is all-sufficient, and faithfull, hath in his Word, which is Truth it selfe, promised these great benefits (in which all are contained) to every true beleever, therefore I who doe truly though weakely, beleue in

Christ,

Christ, may boldly assure my selfe, that all these be mine, and therefore I shall not want any thing needfull for my present comfort, or eternall happinelle. Which whosoever doth daily practise in this manner to main-taine, and increase his faith by application of this, and all other of Gods promises, he shall daily more and more enjoy in this life that blessed estate we speake of.

Pray for
faith.

But for as much as faith is the gift of God, and we cannot further believe then wee bee drawne by Gods spirit, therefore we must ioyne often and fervent prayer, that God by this meanes would increase our faith.

Not easie.

This may seeme easie to bee performed, but vpon better triall, it wil not be found so easie to doe it effectually; for besides our own great want of
melle to believe, I cannot think
of

of any dutie, wherein our common Adversary, will vse more cunning, and diligence to hinder vs, then in this: either by keeping vs from the worke, or beguiling vs in it: whereby it comes to passe, that very few doe (to any good purpose) practise the same.

Amongst many lettes which hinder the faithfull practise here of, I obserue these two, in two divers sorts of beleevers. The former in those, who not sufficiently feeling their wants, and too much contented with their estate, doe not so prize Christ, and this blessed estate in him, as may moue them to take this paines, and therefore neuer reach vnto this growth in grace, wherevnto they might come, if the fault were not in them-selues. The other let, is in those who highly prizes the benefit, and earnestly labouring for it, are by the sense of their owne

Two chiefe
letts.

1. Not pri-
zing Christ.

2. Our va-
worthinesse.

vnworthinelle, so kept downe, that they cannot with any hope looke vp, for so great a blessing.

Remoue of
the first let.

For the remooving of both these lettes, the first iort are to bethinke themselves, what an vncomforable account it will be, when God shall call them to it, to see how many yeares they haue spent, with little growth in grace, either to the glorie of God, or good example to others, or to the peace of their owne soules. Whereas on the other side, they might haue attained vnto such a sweet life, as would haue beene a heauen vpon earth; namely, *To reioyce alwayes in the Lord.*

Of the se-
cond let.

For the other poore soules, who are kept downe with the sense of their owne vnworthinelle, they are to know, that all Gods promises, are free and vndeseryed, so as no vnworthines ought to binder them from be-
lee-

leeving: yea, rather they that haue the most sensē of their owne vnworthinesse, haue most incouragement to beleue, for that voice of Christ, *Come unto me all you that are weary and heauie laden, and I will ease you,* serues not onely for our first conversion, but in all our distresses whatsoever, throughout the whole course of our life.

If any escape both these lets, and goe about this worke, then will Satan vse all his skill to beguile both sorts: such as are weake and heauie hearted, soone discouraged, hee tempts and perswades, they labour in vaine, and doe not beleue, when indeed they doe, as shall appeare. The other sort who are too well conceited, and light hearted, Satan labours to perswade, that they haue more faith then indeed they haue, and that their case is better then in truth it is.

Mat. 11.28.

Satan will
beguile;

Some that
they be-
leeue not;

Others,
that they
haue more
faith then
they haue

It shall bee therefore the wise-
dome of all who will not be de-
ceiued, carefully to examine and
try themselues; which that they
may the better doe, let them
consider of these markes that
follow: whereby either sort
may certainly iudge of them-
selues.

Foure
markes of
faith not
seen.

- 1 Griefe
for want of
faith.
2. Constant
labour for
it.
3. True
loue to
God.

For such as consonably en-
devour to nourish their faith in
such manner as hath beeene
shewed, and yet finde no com-
fort, but feare they doe not be-
leeue, (when as indeed they
doe) these are to discerne their
faith by such secre特 operations,
as doe certainly shew faith to
be there, though it be not seene:
namely, An vnfeigned griefe
for the want of faith, with an
vncestant indeavour for the at-
taining of it. Againe, A rever-
ent esteeme of God, and heartie
affection of vnfeigned loue to
him, which cannot be without
some former apprehension of
Gods

Gods loue to them, which is in many, (though they see it not). And lattly, A tender Conscience, fearing to displease God, even in smaller matters, which others little regard. Who soever shall finde these fruits, (which cannot come but from faith) may certainly know, that there is a roote of faith grounded in their hearts, though they see it not. But such as haue no feeling of their faith, and see no such effects in their liues, haue iust cause to thinke that they haue no faith at all.

As for the other sort, who are too well perswaded of them-selues, that they finde comfort in meditating on Gods promises, whereas indeed they deceiue them-selues, and haue not that faith they imagine, as their fruits doe shew.

This may bee discerned by these notes;

First, True comfort is vsual-
ly

4. A tender
conscience.

No fruits,
no faith.

Notes of
true and
false com-
fort.

1. True, is
hardly got.

ly very hardly gotten, with much prayer and labour, and it is oft a long time before this be felt: therefore they who vpon their firt thoughts on these promises, finde comfort that they haue part in them, may so farre mistrust, all is not sound, till they shall see some better proofe thereof: which if they doe not, but for all this will be confident, that all is well, it is to be feared, their comfort is not found.

2. Feare of
deceit.

For this is another propertie of that true comfort which springs from faith, especially in young and weake beleevers, that they (so highly valuing the benefit,) are very feareful of being deceived, and must see good evidence before they will be perswaded, that they haue this saving faith.

3. Poore
in spirit,
mourne, and
lowly.

Whereof if they shall be perswaded, yet therwithal is ioyned such a feeling of the weakenesse of

of their faith, and so of all grace, as makes them poore in their owne eyes, & mourne for their wants, thinking lowly of them-selues, and more highly reverencing the graces of God in others. Whereas they who be deceived, are as the *Laodiceans*, rich and wanting nothing, and so be merry, and too light hearted, thinking too well of them-selues, and too slenderly of others, better then themselues.

Another sure marke of sensible faith and comfort, is this, That they that haue tasted of it, can never be satisfied, but still hunger and labour for more: none more diligently vse all good meanes to grow in grace then they: Even as the strong and most healthfull bodie, doth feed better then the weake and sickly. But such as being well satisfied with that they haue, & feele no hunger, nor labour for more, it is evident their faith and

⁴ Hunger
and labour
formore.

and comfort are not good.

5. Answerable
obedi-
ence.

To proceed, and not to gather all that might be added hereto, this shall serue for all; That as like fire, like heate: so like faith, like life, great or small. So that where there is strong faith, there must needs be great obedience, and therefore whosoever hee be that is careleſſe of his converſation, and barren in the fruits of a holy life, his faith must needs be weake, if not dead.

Wherfore to conclude, I ad-
vise every one, who by these
markes shall discerne himſelfe
to bee deceived, with fancie in-
ſtead of faith; to goe about this
worke more ſeriouſly, and to lay
a better foundation of faith, and
not to ſay, hee hath found com-
fort, till he can bring good wit-
nelſe theteoſ. Which whosoe-
ver shall neglect, ſhall in the end
(to ſay no more) lament his fol-
ly, when hee who ſeeing his er-
rour, ſhall more carefully and
con-

constantly put in practise this
maine dutie of daily feeding vp
on Christ, shall grow in grace,
and attaine to that blessed life
here, whereof we speake,
besides eternall life,
the full reward
of all his
labours.

(. . .)

FINIS.
